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DOCUMENT NO. 48
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
☐ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 01/990
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 1-5-80 REVIEWER: 372044

Exemption 6-2521

24 September 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Motivations and Probable Lines of Policy of Mendes-France vis-a-vis German Rearmament

1. We estimate that Mendes-France sincerely believes that economic and social reforms are fundamental to a revitalization of France, and that all other considerations must be subordinated to achieve that goal. Insisting that France has undertaken commitments beyond its strength, he has followed his announced policy of liquidating such commitments by presenting the French Assembly with the necessity of making clear, if distasteful, decisions. Moreover, he has attacked with vigor those questions which divide the nation and stand in the way of progress on what he regards as the fundamental problems of France. He believes himself best fitted to cope with those problems and is determined to remain in the position to do so. However, he remains in office on the basis of a heterogeneous majority which requires the most artful and agile type of political skill.

2. Mendes-France acted on EDC within the frame of his announced policy and although it is possible that sinister

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ulterior motives (e.g., a deal over Indochina) are responsible for his weak presentation of EDC before the Chamber, we believe that his action is more plausibly explained otherwise. We believe that he did not like EDC and felt that France was not yet ready for the strong medicine of supra-nationalism. Further he probably estimated that no matter how great his efforts in behalf of EDC he would either suffer a clear defeat in the Assembly or win by, at best, so small a margin as to leave France deeply divided on the issue. In either case he would jeopardize his chances of staying in power, let alone his chances of success with respect to his all-important program of economic reform.

3. At London, we believe that Mendes-France, even if only to preserve his political position against attacks from the "pro-Europeans" in the Assembly, will try to reach an agreement on general principles. Such an agreement probably would leave vital questions unresolved, and hence might permit the envisaged month-long negotiations by experts. Moreover, the French are likely to insist on certain conditions, such as making the Brussels and North Atlantic treaties co-terminous; obtaining a UK military commitment via the Brussels Pact; controlling the levels of West German forces and armaments; and possibly settlement of the Saar issue.

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4. It must be recognized that Mendes-France is a highly complex character and there is no simple formula to explain or forecast his actions. [A ~~Levantine~~ Sephardic Jew by background and married to a Levantine wife, he does not react according to usual patterns with which the West is familiar] He now is a man "with a mission" [where ends tend to justify the means] He considers that his continual hold on power is essential to achieve vitally needed objectives for his country and hence he may compromise or evade on issues which he felt might bring him down in mid-stream while boldly pressing for decisions where he has the votes.

5. His quick and facile mind easily lends itself to trick answers to vastly complicated issues, particularly in the foreign field where he has neither great knowledge or very solid convictions beyond the general conviction that France is over-extended and hence that he must be quicker to cut responsibilities than to assume new ones. He desires to free France from financial dependence on the US.

6. He is surrounded by a "brain trust" which includes some doubtful characters and even some persons who approach

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being intellectual charlatans and fellow travellers. So far he has been neglecting to consult career officials, particularly in the Foreign Office.

7. We have examined a great spate of rumors emanating from Italy, the Vatican, the Low Countries, and even France itself, to the general effect that Mendes-France is a prisoner and tool of the Soviet and that he has made a deal with Molotov. As yet we have no hard evidence to support any of these rumors; in fact the best evidence we have is to the effect that Mendes-France personally is not inclined toward Communism, but this does not mean that if he felt that his somewhat messianic mission could only be accomplished by a deal with the Soviet or by some trick formula involving the Soviet, he might not proceed along this line. If he did so, he would however do it in the context that this was the salvation of France and not because of a communist leaning.

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SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates

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